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## METRICAL PASSAGES IN SUETONIUS.

BY ALBERT A. HOWARD.

A CONSIDERABLE number of passages in the "Lives of the Caesars" conform so closely to metrical rules, and in content are of such a nature that the conclusion is forced upon us, either that they are conscious quotations from poetry, or that Suetonius, for some reason which is not perfectly clear, dressed them in poetical garb. Attention has been called to some of these passages in an article by the late Professor Lane, in the last volume of the *Studies*, but apparently it was not his intention to cite all possible examples of this peculiarity.

Not all of the passages which conform to metrical rules were intended as poetry. Some of them are almost certainly to be regarded as the result of accident, occurring as they do in most prosaic surroundings, and showing in their contents nothing of a poetical nature. Thus in *Aug.* 25, *libertino milite . . . bis usus est : semel ad praesidium coloniarum Illyricum contingentium, iterum ad tutelam ripae Rheni fluminis*, the words in italics are, without change, a faultless senarius. The rhythm of the words, owing to the correspondence of ictus and word-accent, is obvious, and yet it is almost equally obvious that the passage was not intended as poetry. The rhythm would not be so conspicuous were it not for the word *fluminis*, which completes the senarius, and it is worthy of note that in nine other places in which Suetonius mentions the Rhine this word is not added, and that in one place only, *Iul.* 25, where a contrast seems desirable, is it added. Again, in *Aug.* 32, the words *ac plerisque iudicandi munus detractantibus* are, without change, a trochaic septenarius, with the regular diaeresis after the fourth foot, and with ictus and word-accent everywhere coincident, so that the rhythm of the passage, there being no elisions, can hardly escape notice. The sense of the passage is, to say the least, unpoetical. A third extract in *Cal.* 10, *tantique in avum et qui iuxta erant obsequii, ut non immerito sit dictum, nec servum meliorem*

*ullum, nec deteriore dominum fuisse*, shows in the italicized words, without change, a dactylic hexameter plus the words *dominum fuisse*, and if changed to the direct form, by transposing a single word, may be read as senarii :

nec sérvus melior úllus nec dominús fuit  
detérior.

These words of the orator Passienus are, however, quoted in slightly different order by Tacitus, *Ann.* vi. 20, *neque meliorem unquam servum neque deteriore dominum fuisse*, and as here there is no suggestion whatever of metrical form, it is hardly conceivable that Suetonius intended to quote them as poetry.

There is one quotation which seems to occupy a middle ground between poetry and prose. It is the passage at the end of *Aug.* 4, where we are told that the poet, Cassius Parmensis, in a letter addressed the following insulting words to Augustus : *Materna tibi farinast ex crudissimo Ariciae pistrino : hanc finxit manibus collybo decoloratis Nerulonensis mensarius*. Without change the first half of this extract may be read as senarii, and we know from the poems of Catullus that the iambic<sup>1</sup> metre is peculiarly adapted to this vituperative form of address. The word *farina*, in the sense which it here has, occurs in literature only in Persius 5. 115, although as a slang expression it was possibly common enough in colloquial language. This fact alone is hardly sufficient evidence on which to base the assertion that this meaning of *farina* is poetical, and that therefore the quotation is poetical, but there is other evidence which points in this same direction. The whole passage has a poetical tinge ; *finxit*, meaning to touch or handle, is found rarely, and then only in poetry ; *Nerulonensis*, if this is really the word used by Cassius as an indirect allusion to Thurii, is pretty certainly poetical ; and there is no word in the entire quotation which cannot be introduced into iambic verse. It seems incredible that any one should have used such insulting language as is here quoted in a prose letter to Augustus-

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<sup>1</sup> Ribbeck, *Römische Dichtung*, ii. 4, says of Cassius Parmensis : "Wie sein giftiger Prosabrief an Octavian ganz im Stil des Antonius gehalten war, so denkt man sich seine Verse am besten als Epigramme im Tone Catullischer Distichen oder Iamben."

tus, and equally incredible that a poet should have written a verse and a half of iambic poetry without recognizing the fact that he had done so.

The most obvious method of attacking the emperor was by means of verse, patterned after the model in Catullus 29, and it is of interest to note that in *Aug.* 68 and 70 we find no less than three such attacks in iambic verse.

It seems, therefore, not improbable that the entire letter of Cassius was, in its original form, in iambic verse, and that Suetonius, without attempting to preserve the entire context, quoted from it so much only as illustrated his remarks about the alleged occupation of the emperor's grandfather, accidentally preserving nearly two verses in their original form.

The following passages, treated either as scraps of verse or as complete verses, seem, from the poetical nature of their contents and often from their sententious character, to justify the conclusion that they are conscious quotations from poetry, changed in a few instances into indirect discourse, to adapt them to the construction of the sentence in which they are introduced.

*Iul.* 32, Tunc Caesar *Eatur* inquit *quo deorum ostenta et inimicorum iniquitas vocat. Iacta alea est.*

Professor Lane reversed the order of the words *inimicorum iniquitas* and treated the quotation as composed of senarii. Without change in the order of words we have one complete iambic octonarius and part of a second :

Eátur quo deórum ostenta et ínimicorum iníquitas  
vocát. Iacta alea ést.

The actual words of Caesar seem, however, to have been *iacta alea esto*, as appears from Plutarch, *Caes.* 32. 6, ἀνεπίφθω κύβος, and from Appian, *B. C.* ii. 35, ὁ κύβος ἀνεπίφθω, cf. Petronius, *de bell. civ.* 174, iudice fortuna *cadat alea*, and Erasmus, on the authority of these passages, proposed in his edition the reading *esto*, without observing the metrical character of the quotation. This change would suit, even better than the accepted text, the supposition that Suetonius is quoting poetry, though this fact, in itself, is hardly sufficient ground for emending the MS. reading.

The quotation may well have been taken from some tragedy. The events of the Civil War were treated in epic poetry by several different writers, and at least two so-called tragedies dealing with incidents of this war are mentioned in literature: the *Iter* of Balbus (Cic. *ad Fam.* x. 32. 3) and the *Cato* of Curiatius Maternus (*dial. de orat.* 2, 3), while many of the historical details of the war, which have been preserved by Plutarch, Appian, and Suetonius, have a decidedly dramatic coloring which might fairly lead to the supposition that a considerable mass of tragedy, not mentioned in the literature, dealt with this subject. It is at least significant that all of the dramatic scenes of the Civil War are drawn from other sources than the Commentaries of Caesar himself, who does not even mention the crossing of the Rubicon.

*Aug.* 87, Cum aliquos numquam soluturos significare vult, *ad Kal. Graecas soluturos* ait.

In the direct form the italicized words are the beginning of a trochaic verse, ictus and word-accent everywhere coinciding:

Ád Kalendas Graécas solvent.

A little later in the same chapter the words:

Conténti simus hóc Catone,

are the beginning of an iambic verse.

*Tib.* 24, Impudentissimo mimo † nunc adhortantis amicos increpans ut *ignaros, quanta bellua esset imperium.*

The word *mimo* is an emendation of J. F. Gronov for *animo*, the only MS. reading. If the emendation is accepted, it follows that the emperor is quoting from a poetical source, although the words in the order in which they stand are void of rhythm. The original may have been a senarius:

Impérium belua ígnoratis quánta sit,

although it must be admitted that this is a somewhat violent attempt to restore it.

*Tib.* 24, Querens miseram et onerosam iniungi sibi servitutem.

In the direct form by changing *et* to *átque* we may read the quotation as a senarius:

Misera átque onerosa iniúngitur mihi sérvitus,

and, in spite of an irregular caesura, I am inclined to think that this is a genuine bit of verse.

*Tib.* 25, ut saepe *lupum se auribus tenere* diceret.

Perhaps this proverb was common enough in prose, but a Roman could hardly help remembering Ter. *Phormio* 506, *aúribus teneó lupum*.

*Tib.* 28, Subinde iactabat in civitate libera linguam mentemque liberas esse debere.

The words of the emperor, if changed to the direct form, are parts of two trochaic septenarii :

In civitate líbera  
língua mensque líberae esse débent.

There is but one case of elision and but one substitution in the entire passage ; ictus and word-accent everywhere coincide, so that the rhythmical nature of the quotation is obvious. Possibly these are *versus populares*.

*Tib.* 62, Identidem *felicem Priamum* vocabat, *quod superstes omnium suorum extitisset*.

These words in direct discourse are a faultless trochaic septenarius :

Félix Priamus quód superstes ómnium suorum éxitit,

and might well have formed a part of some well-known tragedy.

*Cal.* 29, Gallis Graecisque aliquot uno tempore condemnatis, gloriabatur, *Gallograeciam se subegisse*.

These words are, in the direct form, the beginning of a trochaic septenarius :

Gállograeciám subegi,

and were possibly intended as a parody of the famous *versus populares* sung in Caesar's Gallic triumph ; cf. *Iul.* 49, *Gallias Caesar subegit*, etc.

*Nero* 49, Causatus *nondum adesse fatalem horam*.

In the direct form these words are perhaps the beginning of a trochaic septenarius :

Nóndum adest fatális hora.

Nero was so thoroughly the actor that it need cause no surprise to

find him quoting tragedy when his life is hanging in the balance ; almost with his dying breath he quotes from the *Iliad* :

"Ἰππων μ' ὠκνπόδων ἀμφὶ κτόπος οὖατα βάλλει.

*Vit.* 8, *Bono*, inquit, *animo estote ! nobis adluxit.*

These words of Vitellius, uttered to allay the anxiety of his adherents who regarded as an evil omen a fire which had suddenly broken out in the dining room of the headquarters, may well be a quotation from some tragedy. Without change they are an incomplete senarius, lacking only the last foot, which was perhaps the word *deus* :

**Bono ánimo estote ! Nóbis adluxít [deus].**

*Vesp.* 16, Quidam natura cupidissimum tradunt, idque exprobratum ei a sene bubulco, qui, negata sibi gratuita libertate . . . proclamaverit, *vulpem pilum mutare non mores.*

The words in italics suggest a possible moral to some well-known fable about the fox in disguise ; possibly the same puzzling fable which is referred to in *Hor. Sat.* ii. 3. 186,

astuta ingenuum vulpes imitata leonem,

and in *Persius* v. 116,

pelliculam veterem retines et fronte politus  
astutam vapido servas sub pectore vulpem,

or, in another form, the wolves in sheep's clothing of *St. Matthew* viii. 15.

Assuming a fable in poetic form after the style of *Phaedrus*, the words of the quotation are, without change, an incomplete senarius, which may be completed as follows :

[*Fábula haec*]

vulpém pilum mutáre non morés [docet],

or in the direct form :

**Vulpés pilum mutáre non morés [potest].**

An exact metrical equivalent for either of these forms may be found in *Phaedrus* v. 7. 10 :

Inter manus sublatas et multum gemens.